

# Newsletter

DR KARLA JOHNSTON - CLINICAL & COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGIST

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ISSUE 1

## Coping with job loss

### Practical steps to get you “back on the horse”

**Being laid off usually comes as a shock. We are not always prepared for that “rainy day”; it is hard enough to make ends meet, let alone save.**

Clinical Psychologist Dr Karla Johnston said: “At first, we can feel a strong urge to resolve our situation as quickly as possible, whether that be phoning Centrelink, contacting our business networks or asking our family for help.”

“If we can’t find another source of income quickly, it can leave us feeling angry, overwhelmed, and worried about our immediate future and how it will impact on us and others.”

Sometimes, we can start to question ourselves and wonder how we will be good enough to compete for jobs. We can get caught up in concerns about qualifications, skills, age, and being able to promote ourselves all while carrying a heavy heart about what went wrong in our last job.

While it is normal to take some time to feel confused, ultimately we need to get back on the horse. Practical tips to help in the job search process include:

- 🕒 Finding out **how** to look for work – think, talk, do – Google it
- 🕒 Update your resume and provide reliable and trustworthy referees
- 🕒 Job searching is like working, so decide your hours of job search work – it is energy draining, so time-limit it and take weekends off
- 🕒 Set a goal for how many jobs you will apply for each day and reward yourself for achieving it

- 🕒 Rope in a “coach” (e.g. friend, partner) to help you get started each day, and to debrief with including your successes and your struggles with the process
- 🕒 Be prepared to accept new conditions for now (e.g. lower pay, lower level) – see this approach as a short-term solution
- 🕒 Contact local recruitment agencies for help, even consider temporary work
- 🕒 Phone Centrelink and see if they can offer any help.

“If you can take one small step forward every day, it will give you the energy to keep going,” Karla said.

“Job searching is a skill that needs practise. Be brave, bold and courageous – you never know what will come your way, who you meet might, and how your life could change for the better.”



# Is it time to take time out for yourself?

Therapy can be life changing but it can take courage to make that first appointment.



**Having a chance to find out more about yourself and how you function is a luxury these days. We are all caught up in busy lives whether that be work, family, friends, projects, and study...the list goes on.**

We can all feel stressed out, low self-esteem, and unhappy at times. It is part of the human experience to become aware of who we are and how to give ourselves self-compassion and kindness.

Words like "psychologist", "psychiatrist" and "therapy" can be viewed positively and negatively depending on your experience. They can be the wall between you gaining some care and support rather than trying to cope alone. At the end of the day, those who work in the caring profession are just like you, and at times may have accessed support themselves.

It is usually comforting to see a therapist for many reasons including:

- ⊙ The confidential nature of the experience, so you feel safe and listened to without fear you might hurt someone else's feelings
- ⊙ Gaining an external point of view of your experience that might be a little more objective than that of those who know you well
- ⊙ Enhancing communication and problem-solving skills to manage challenging situations at home, work, or school
- ⊙ Learning ways to relax, feel more contented, and more in control of your life

- ⊙ Building confidence to do new things that might also help you feel stronger and happier such as yoga, sport, hobbies, meeting a partner and/or new friends.

There are many therapists around who can offer a range of ways to assist you get stronger on your feet. Like any relationship, even a professional relationship, it is important you feel confidence and comfort when talking with your therapist.

*Live in the sunshine,  
swim the sea, drink the wild air..*

*—Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Sometimes it might take a few sessions to get to know one another. If your gut tells you it isn't working out, be prepared to let your therapist know or give another therapist a second chance. There is no harm in trying something new - it could be a life changing moment. Therapy is for everyone really but it can take some courage to book the first appointment. You matter, and it is about time you take some time out for yourself.

To find a psychologist visit:

<http://www.psychology.org.au/>

- Dr Karla Johnston



**Karla has worked as a registered psychologist for more than 20 years in a range of settings caring for people from all walks of life.**

Her areas of expertise include anxiety disorders, mood disorders and complex trauma.

Karla is passionate about therapy as a process of self-discovery and self-compassion for everyone, and as such regularly attends therapy herself.

She is registered as a Clinical and Counselling Psychologist with the Psychologists' Board of Australia and is a full member of the Australian Psychological Society.

Karla has a Bachelor of Psychology with Honours and a Doctor of Philosophy.

# What is happening to me... I can't cope at work

## One of the hardest things to recognise in ourselves is psychological burnout.

We might be someone who has always been able to cope with lots of things happening at once, and then all of sudden we feel overwhelmed; unable to sleep well; experience changes in appetite; finding excuses to not go out with our friends and family; staying back later and later at work; and not being able to switch off.

Worse still, we can start thinking we are incompetent at our jobs; that others could do it better; and that we are letting everyone down. It doesn't matter who you are or what position you hold – we are all susceptible to burnout if we face significant stressors.

Burnout can be triggered by a change in our workplace (that might have happened recently or weeks ago). It could be small changes or bigger changes that might have happened rapidly without time for us to adjust.

We might be expected to do things that don't seem humanly impossible but we find it hard to assert ourselves; ask questions for clarification and prioritisation; provide other options/solutions; or just let our managers know we are struggling and need some support/guidance.

We might think that everyone else around us is coping well, and we are the only ones not doing so well, which can be a very isolating experience. If we don't recognise the signs of psychological burnout and take some time out to care for ourselves we can be faced with physical illnesses and symptoms like headaches, muscle tension, nausea, gastro problems, and the list goes on. We might start self-medicating with sugar, alcohol, coffee, tobacco and cannabis etc. more regularly as it seems to give us quick relief but only ends up making us crave them more and more.

We need to listen to ourselves and others we trust; when we know we are not functioning well and hear others say they are concerned, we should do something about it. For example, talking it through with a trusted friend; visiting with our general practitioners for advice; and seeing a psychologist for some support.

If you or someone you know is feeling distressed you are encouraged to phone:

Emergency Services **000**

Lifeline 24-hour counselling Helpline

**13 11 14**

*"There are more, far more,  
good people in the world than bad.  
The bad just seem to get louder.  
Listen for the whispers."*

—Vickie Girard

We can also continue with our regular self-care routines such as regular exercise, relaxation strategies, eating and sleeping well, and enjoying pleasurable activities. At work, we need to stick to our set work times; take our lunch breaks; assert ourselves when we need time out; put boundaries in place to manage our workloads effectively; take our annual leave regularly; and share our concerns with others who will be understanding and caring. If you let someone know you are not feeling 100 per cent they will be able to help you take small steps to resolve the situation so you can feel able to cope. You are competent, you have probably been asked to do too much.

— Dr Karla Johnston



# Take one day at a time when looking for love

**Wouldn't it be great if the love of our life could save us all the heartache and just come and knock on our door (preferably yesterday)?**

We all have a right to feel loved – but sometimes that love comes in different shapes and sizes to what we had expected. It might not happen when we had hoped, which can cause us to feel mixed emotions like fear, confusion, sadness, and loneliness. But, we really have to be careful not to miss love by being scared to let down our guard.

The search for love can be arduous and it is important to have good friends and family around who provide us with a comfortable space to express our feelings and worries without feeling judged negatively.

We also need to be proactive in the search for love. Consider participating in experiences that are new and perhaps, daunting to us where we encounter more people. For example, signing up to a dating agency; agreeing to a blind date arranged by friends we trust; speed dating (at least once); learning new activities; changing jobs; going back to study; or going on a group holiday; undertaking volunteer work...the list goes on.




Sometimes love is staring us in the face but our own mental roadblocks stop us from getting to know someone in a new or different light. Just as we hope someone will give us a chance, let's make sure we are also giving others a chance.

Stepping back and thinking about the big picture of life might help in moments of despair – love might come sooner or later than we think, but we want to be ready for it, so we need to be healthy mentally.

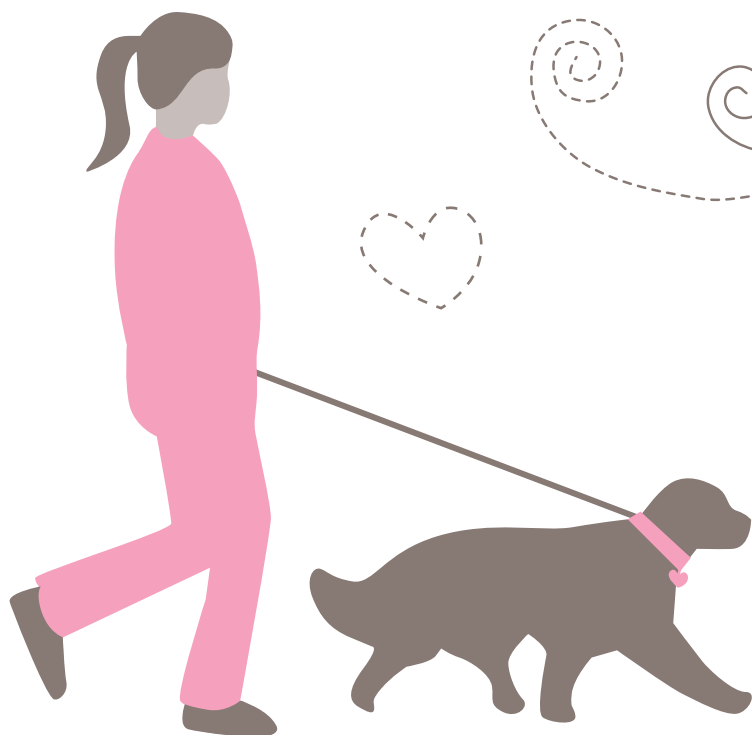
Think of other ways to find nurturance in the meantime, like adopting a pet; looking after children; spending time with someone who has experienced a lot more life than you.

Let's take it one day at a time and don't get too far ahead of ourselves...daydreaming is an important escape but taking action daily keeps it real. So, go and open your front door and step outside your comfort zone.

- Dr Karla Johnston



*"We really have to be careful not to miss love by being scared to let down our guard."*



**To make a therapy appointment with Karla**

**Nundah Village Family Practice  
T 07 3266 6622**